

Sopwell Residents Association

Annual report 2015/16

Committee structure and changes

Peter Wares has decided not to stand for re-election. He has been a long standing member and has given a lot of input over the years. We thank him for his work. I, myself, will also be leaving the committee as I am moving out of the area. We have gained one new committee member, Steve Peters, during the past year so we now have six vacancies. While expressing gratitude to the work of all current committee members, it is really important that new people come forward to join the committee as this is essential to help the association to continue its various activities.

The following people are putting themselves forward for election/re-election:
Barry Bateman, Jack Hill, Willem Hofland, Mark James, Steve Peters,
Martin Reed, Adelle Stapleton, Dom Tang, Jennifer Taylor, Rick Taylor

The following are prepared to be re-elected as officers:

Chairperson: Rick Taylor

Vice Chairperson: *vacant*

Treasurer: Dom Tang

Minutes Secretary: Jennifer Taylor

Admin Secretary: *vacant*

I am happy to become an ex-officio member to help steer the new secretary and help any new committee members fulfil their roles.

Activities and events

Sopwell Memories Project

The website continues to be very popular. To date 49,385 people have viewed the site which is almost double that of last year. Several new postings have been added during the year.

Our set of five history walk leaflets were a "sell out" although we did not sell any and they have been reprinted twice.

In August we had the charity stall in St Albans Saturday market to promote Sopwell Memories and to try to sell more copies of our book. It was a lovely day and many turned up to see us. We were allocated a stall in front of the town hall and with the stall

sporting the fine new Sopwell Residents Association banner (in St Albans colours), we laid it out with photographs and information texts. The stall soon proved to be quite a draw to the shoppers and passers-by, locals and visitors to St Albans alike. Some of the old aerial photographs, most of which were taken immediately post WWII, generated considerable curiosity with locals trying to pin-point the streets they could recognise, which in turn gave rise to jolted memories and stories - especially in relation to the gas works! The five piles of Sopwell walk leaflets were quickly snatched up as were the leaflets on the Nunnery Green Space. We were supported during the day by visits from all three of Sopwell Ward's councillors, and also by the Mayor, each of whom stayed for a while and chatted to stall visitors.

Our publication, *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories*, is still selling but very slowly. We still have many more to shift. All monies received goes towards community projects and activities. Please help us to market them to anyone interested.

Walks

With help from Countryside Management Services a bat walk was held on 20th August 2015. Unfortunately, the "batman" Roger Havard, was indisposed on the day so Michael Iseard, Project Officer from Countryside Management Services, was on hand to lead a merry group of people on their quest to learn and hopefully hear and see our local Sopwell bats. The event was fully booked and about 28 people showed up. They managed to spot and identify two different kinds of bat: Daubenton's and Common Pipistrelle. Everyone said they had a good time and the feedback was very positive.

A walk led by Chris Pudsey was supposed to have been held on 28th November as part of Sustainable St Albans week. However, with rainy weather, and no-one but the organisers turning up, it was abandoned.

Litter pick

Our annual litter pick was held on 6th March this year. It was part of a nationwide Clean for the Queen Keep Britain Tidy event to mark the Queen's 90th birthday. About 20 of us turned out on a very cold day and we picked about 30 bags of litter and recyclables.

Willow tunnel

The willow tunnel suffered from damage by vandals earlier last year and Hazel Godfrey, our willow expert, had to do a lot of patching up. In August it was due a haircut and this was done by a group of keen Sopwell volunteers. Hazel thinks that this group is now competent to take the annual maintenance on themselves and this spring they have done just that. Well done to the group led by Barry Bateman. Please contact Barry if you would like to help keep this tunnel looking good.

150th anniversary of the London Road - Hatfield railway

The Alban Way is what remains of the Hatfield to St Albans railway line and last October saw the 150th anniversary of the opening of this line and a group of dedicated

enthusiasts organised a splendid celebration of this event. On Friday the 16th October – the actual anniversary - there was a guided walk from Hatfield along the length of the whole line to St Albans, exploring the social, natural and railway history. Participants were invited to do the whole walk or join at various stages along the route. On Sunday the 18th October there was another guided walk starting from the London Road station site (St Albans) this time and at various stops along the line there were numerous activities.

The SRA had a stand at the London Road end with a display of leaflets, photographs and information about the railway from a Sopwell perspective. The St Albans Signal Box enthusiasts were in attendance and also local musicians provided some musical entertainment. The Alban Way being a cycle route, also brought several keen cyclists out to cycle the route and learn about its history along the way.

Conferences and meetings

- We have held six committee meetings during the year.
- Rick Taylor attended meetings of the Combined Group of Residents Associations.
- Rick Taylor attended meetings of the City and Neighbourhoods Committee of St Albans City and District Council.
- Willem Hofland attended two meetings of the Bus User Forum
- Willem Hofland attended four meetings of the Tenant Services Forum
- Sandy Norman and Jack Hill attended a meetings of the Friends of Sopwell Nunnery Open Space Management Group
- Jennifer Taylor and Linda Bateman attended a thank you party for volunteer groups last December at the House of Commons hosted by Anne Main MP.

Communications We have produced two newsletters in the past year. Thank you to our happy band of newsletter deliverers. Our website www.sopwell.org.uk is managed and updated regularly thanks to Peter Segers.

Sandy Norman
April 2016